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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

AIRGRAM

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FROM : Department of State

DATE:

SUBJECT : Assessment of the 27th UN General Assembly

REF :

1. OVERALL ASSESSMENT

With virtually every important world issue debated at the General Assembly, it is a telling commentary on the state of that body that most of our effort had to be expended on preventing bad situations from getting worse--i.e., on damage-limiting. A large number of rhetorical or redundant resolutions were passed, but sound decisions did carry forward useful work on a number of important issues. On the whole, we can be pleased with the outcome, and we are grateful for the support of our diplomatic missions in some critical situations.

For us, the endorsement by more than two-thirds for reduction of our assessment to 25 percent (from the present 31.52 percent) was especially gratifying; but this was correctly perceived by the majority as the necessary choice of a lesser evil. Many developing nations, in particular, realistically went along to avoid possible adverse repercussions on the level of our voluntary contributions.

The greatest successes of the GA were on the economic and normative side, where we pushed through the Stockholm Conference package on the environment, placed the population program on a sounder basis, and got the law of the sea conference on the rails. We were, however, steam-rollered on a number of issues that saw the have-nots pitted against the haves.

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Overall, we see the following trends:

-- A greater cohesion among the so-called non-aligned countries, notably on issues involving the national liberation movements in Africa and other questions of particular interest to the LDCs. The most important manifestation of this phenomenon was the stonewall front which turned aside all efforts to get substantive action on terrorism and the protection of diplomats. Other instances were the stronger anti-Israel resolution on the Middle East, the less satisfactory vote (for us) on the Indian Ocean Peace Zone, the overwhelming votes in favor of a World Disarmament Conference (WDC) and on the need for rules governing Direct Broadcast Satellites, and, of course, the vigor behind resolutions on "colonialism and racism" in Southern Africa.

-- As a closely related phenomenon, increasing LDC cohesion and militance on the issue of the control of natural resources. While the difference from previous GA's was one of degree, we saw significance in the thunderous applause greeting the speeches of Bouteflika (Algeria), Salvador Allende and other spokesmen for more extreme positions; and in the resonance for charges against "multinational corporations" and the unanimous LDC vote on "permanent sovereignty over natural resources." The developing nations also tried hard to make the GATT more responsive to their interests but with little support from the developed countries. Location of the environment secretariat in Nairobi was perceived (and articulated) as a case of the LDCs showing their "political will."

-- The beginnings of group consultation and concerted positions among the nine members of the European Economic Community, detracting a bit from the closeness of our own consultations with them in the WEO (Western European and Others) caucus. Perhaps the most notable manifestation of this developing solidarity was the role of the EC Nine in shaping and giving stature to a Middle East resolution which was clearly designed to generate diplomatic pressure on Israel and even on our assistance to Israel in spite of our clear distaste for that exercise. On one occasion, one of the EC Nine spoke formally on behalf of their group--a probable portent for the future.

-- A greater frequency of complete U.S. isolation in voting especially on political issues. We were less inclined this year to make tactical compromises to improve our short-term parliamentary position, often using our vote to maintain our credibility on the substance of issues rather than to affect the voting outcome. As a result, for reasons

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explained elsewhere in this Airgram, we stood alone in abstaining on the resolution to establish a study committee on holding a WDC, and we cast lone negative votes on Kenya's bid for the environment secretariat, and on a request to the Outer Space Committee to elaborate principles on satellite television broadcasting. Our company also dwindled in voting against or abstaining on Middle East resolutions and on a number of African resolutions (some edging closer to recognition of liberation groups).

-- A decrease in the momentum of Soviet initiatives (although the U.S.S.R. more frequently than we was in the mainstream of the Assembly on political issues). With the groundwork laid for admittance of the two Germanies next year, the Korea question postponed, avoidance of a general debate on Bangladesh membership, and minimal substantive discussion of Puerto Rico, East-West differences were less prominent than North-South differences. The major Soviet initiative on "non-use of force," which would in effect permit Soviet use of nuclear weapons to meet a Chinese conventional attack, met with a massive expression of ennui. On WDC, in the face of demurrers by the U.S., the PRC and others, the Soviets had to settle for a watered-down resolution setting up a study committee. Even on their perennial "Strengthening International Security" (SIS) item, the play was again taken away from them by the non-aligned. On the other hand, we found common ground with the U.S.S.R. on a number of disarmament questions, as well as on law of the seas and certain budgetary questions, and were able to avoid serious conflict in the environment question over German representation.

-- Greater activity and a more sharply defined profile of the People's Republic of China. The PRC delegation broadened its activities to virtually all aspects of GA work and showed ease and skill in dealing with other delegations. The Chinese were also active socially, accepting and extending invitations even to those with whom they have no diplomatic relations. They maintained a sound working relationship with our Mission. Illustrative of PRC tactical skill was their vote with the majority on the WDC issue, even while they let it be known that they would have nothing to do with a WDC or serve on the study committee. Major PRC themes were still opposition to "super-power hegemony," support for "anti-imperialist" revolutionary movements, and solidarity with the third world. While opposing us on many issues (Middle East, terrorism, colonialism, law of the sea), their sharpest attacks were directed at the U.S.S.R.

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The session underscored again that at this stage in history the world organization is most effective in serving as a vehicle for the delivery of technical assistance, drafting international law and setting standards for international behavior in specific fields. It is not yet the solvent for large political and security issues--although we must continue to try constructively to move it in that direction.

2. POLITICAL ISSUES

Terrorism and Hijacking. The effort by the U.S. and like-minded nations to get the UN to take strong and speedy international legal action to combat international terrorism and enforce air security suffered a major rebuff when the Assembly overwhelmingly adopted a non-aligned resolution (supported by the Soviets and East Europeans) that merely set up a Committee to study the comments of governments on the problem and submit a report to the next session.

We had hoped to maintain the momentum of the Secretary General's initiative requesting the GA to consider measures to prevent international terrorism and of the Secretary's proposals for urgent action, notably the convening early in 1973 of a diplomatic conference to draw up a convention directed against the export of international terrorism. Western efforts to set up a specific timetable for drafting and approving such a convention were countered by Arab and African delegations, causing the Soviets, who had initially been cooperative, to back away from us. The Arabs saw the UN exercise as inspired by the west and directed against the fedayeen. Despite our assurances, African delegations also were concerned that anti-terrorist measures would somehow circumscribe African liberation movements.

The Arab-led Afro-Asian coalition spurned a compromise resolution sponsored inter alia by Italy, Austria, Canada, and the U.K. (which would have condemned acts of terrorism, requested the International Law Commission to draft a convention to be considered at an early conference and set up a working group to study causes), opting instead for a delay of indefinite duration in coming to grips with the problem. By a vote of 76-34 (U.S.), with 16 abstentions, the Assembly established a study committee limited to recommending "possible cooperation" for elimination of terrorism and exploring causes. Moreover, the thrust of the resolution was changed for us by its emphasis on reaffirming "the inalienable right to self-determination and independence of all peoples under colonial and racist regimes" and condemning "the continuation of repressive and terrorist acts by colonial, racist, and alien regimes."

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Although the United States and a number of other delegations pressed for quicker action, the General Assembly also voted to postpone final consideration of the draft articles on the protection of diplomatic agents and other officials until the 1973 General Assembly.

Soviet "Initiatives." With the PRC their key target, major Soviet initiatives were mainly propaganda-oriented: A proposal that the Assembly endorse "non-use of force" in international relations and permanent prohibition of use of nuclear weapons; a highly-restrictive draft convention on international direct television broadcasting via satellites; and renewed efforts to get the Assembly to schedule a World Disarmament Conference.

Though characterized as "fraudulent" by the PRC, and widely viewed as a meaningless repetition of principles in the UN Charter and numerous declarations, the proposal for non-use of force was adopted, but with substantial abstentions (73-4-46). Asians and Africans supported it partly as log-rolling and partly because they did not wish to spurn the Soviets on a "peace" initiative. We abstained because we were skeptical about the utility of restating principles of the Charter through GA resolutions which detract from and indeed distort the provisions of the Charter.

On direct satellite television broadcasting to home receivers in other countries, the Assembly refused to accept as a primary basis for action the Soviet draft convention (which would have required prior consent to such broadcasts by the receiving state); instead it requested the Outer Space Committee to "elaborate principles." Although this was an improvement, we opposed the commitment to establish "principles" at this early stage of development of the technology and because of our concern for the free flow of information. We recognize that the vote, in which we were in a minority of one, showed that many countries are genuinely concerned over what they see as a need to protect their populations against foreign influences.

The Soviets failed to move the Assembly forward on actually convening or establishing preparatory machinery for a WDC. We have opposed such a conference, which offers little promise of constructive accomplishment, and continue to believe that progress in this highly complex field can best be achieved in expert forums of manageable size such as the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament (CCD). We abstained on the final resolution sponsored by the non-aligned and declined to serve on the study

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committee which it called for, among other reasons because the indicated lack of participation by all nuclear powers would preclude any chance of the committee producing useful results.

Concrete Disarmament Questions. We supported a resolution stressing the urgency of ending nuclear weapons testing in the atmosphere, but abstained on two other test ban resolutions which we considered unsatisfactory. One condemned and set an arbitrary deadline for a halt to all nuclear weapons testing and the other called on the U.S. and U.S.S.R. to stop underground testing. We reaffirmed U.S. support for an adequately verified test ban. The U.S. supported the Assembly's resolution requesting the CCD to continue giving high priority to negotiations toward early agreement on effective measures to prohibit the development, production, and stockpiling of chemical weapons.

Along with most maritime powers, we abstained on the Sri Lanka resolution calling for support of the concept of the Indian Ocean as a "peace zone" and setting up an ad hoc committee to study "practical measures" to further the concept. We viewed such a study as particularly inappropriate since it implicitly looked toward a regional attempt to set up a special regime over navigation on part of the high seas in advance of the 1973-1974 worldwide conference on the law of the sea.

We also abstained on a resolution commending the report of "expert" consultants to the SYG on napalm and other incendiary weapons. We took the public position that we had avoided association with the report from its inception but considered that the report and the resolution contained political conclusions we could not accept.

Middle East. While no debate would have been preferable, the outcome did not unduly affect the prospects for further diplomatic efforts toward a Middle East agreement. As before, the debate and the resolution were inspired by Egypt, whose apparent aim was to maximize the impression that the UN and "world public opinion" backed Egyptian policies against those of Israel. As in previous years, the resolution drew selectively on SC resolution 242, castigated Israel for alleged failure to cooperate with UN peace efforts, and criticized the Israeli attitude towards occupied Arab territories. A new feature of the early

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drafts circulated at Egypt's behest was to call upon states to give no military or economic aid to Israel which would enable it to continue its occupation of Arab territories. This passage in turn provoked a new element in Israeli opposition to GA debates on the Middle East: its threat to dissociate Israel from SC Res 242 as a basis for a peace settlement.

Consultations between Egypt and members of the EC Nine led to some changes in the draft resolution which partly redressed the political "balance" of the resolution and removed the implicit threat of "sanctions" against Israel. The Arabs can take satisfaction from the increasing support they achieved for a slightly tougher resolution (86-7-31 this year, 79-7-37 in 1971, and 57-16-39 in 1970). While the Israelis finally dropped their threat on 242, the impact of the GA resolution on them was clearly not a positive one.

Ambassador Bush explained that the U.S. would have voted against the paragraph dealing with "aid" to Israel (had a separate vote been agreed by the Assembly) but the U.S. abstained on the resolution as a whole. Many Arab delegations seemed satisfied with this stand and the Israeli Delegation expressed understanding of our position and appreciation for the forthright U.S. statements during the debate.

African Issues. This GA was noteworthy in launching a determined campaign to obtain legitimacy of national liberation movements as "authentic representatives" of African peoples. In particular, efforts were stepped up to secure status in UN bodies for liberation movements in Portuguese Territories. Over our opposition these groups were invited to sit as observers at Committee Four sessions; the Africans desisted in an attempt to have Amilcar Cabral, head of PAIGC, invited to address the GA only after Cabral withdrew when he realized the invitation would not gain a consensus. An increasing number of resolutions demanded direct UN aid to these movements outside and "in liberated areas." In voting against these resolutions we were in a small minority sometimes including only the U.K., Portugal and South Africa.

In contrast to the constructive action by the SC on November 22 which called on Portugal to negotiate with "the parties concerned" toward reaching "a solution of the armed confrontation that exists" in the Portuguese Territories, the GA acted unhelpfully

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in adopting by 96-6-8 a blatantly partisan resolution which, while also favoring negotiations, stipulated that the national liberation movements were the "authentic representatives of the true aspirations" of the peoples concerned. Similarly on Rhodesia the U.S. found itself in a small minority in opposing what we considered extreme and impractical assertions of the GA's authority. We were particularly disturbed over a resolution containing specific condemnation of the U.S. for importation of chrome and other metals in accord with the Byrd Amendment. Last year's resolutions had asked us not to take this step, while the SC resolutions avoided direct condemnation of the U.S.

SIS and SOR. Although originally a Soviet propaganda vehicle, the SIS (Strengthening International Security) resolution in 1972 reflected primarily non-aligned concerns, particularly on the sovereign right freely to dispose of natural resources. Because of the item's glittering generalities the U.S., Japan and other West Europeans adopted a posture of massive indifference, and the resolution was adopted 94-2 (South Africa, Portugal) to 12 (U.S.).

At the request of Romania, the GA discussed an item entitled "Strengthening of the role of the UN with regard to the maintenance and consolidation of international peace and security, the development of co-operation among all nations and the promotion of the rules of international law in relations between states" (SOR). The Romanians proved highly cooperative in accepting western comments, and without formal vote the GA adopted a declaratory resolution on the usefulness of strengthening the UN, inter alia, for "safeguarding the right of all peoples to decide their own fate without any outside interference." The Soviets appeared uneasy over this Romanian initiative and did not fail to notice the greater attention and support received by SOR (with its implied criticism of the Brezhnev Doctrine) than SIS.

Seabeds and Oceans. We were pleased that the Assembly decided unanimously on an "accelerated" work program of preparations leading to a two-week organizational session of the Third UN Law of the Sea (LOS) Conference at New York in November, 1973, and an eight-week substantive session at Santiago, Chile, in April and May 1974. The Conference, with the approval of the General Assembly, may provide for additional time if it is needed. The 28th General Assembly will

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review the progress of the preparatory work, which will include 13 weeks of meetings in 1973, and will make any further necessary decisions, including issuing invitation for the Conference. Conclusion of a comprehensive LOS treaty will require reaching agreement on a number of major issues, including the nature of the international regime to be established for the deep seabeds, the breadth of the territorial sea, free transit through international straits, fisheries, marine pollution and scientific research.

There was little substantive discussion on LOS at this session of the Assembly. However, a significant split developed among the LDC's when, over the staunch opposition of Latin American and other coastal states which espouse broad national jurisdiction, the Assembly adopted a resolution sponsored by a group of land-locked and shelf-locked states, requesting the Secretary-General to prepare a study comparing the economic significance for the international community of various proposed seaward limits of national jurisdiction. We voted for that resolution, and also for one sponsored by Peru, requesting the Secretary-General to prepare a related study comparing the economic significance for coastal states of such proposed limits of national jurisdiction.

Human Rights. As in past years the principal focus was on racial questions, leaving little time for equally important issues. The Assembly decided to launch in 1973 a Decade for Struggle Against Racism and Racial Discrimination. Overcoming Soviet and Arab objections, the Assembly also decided that at its next session it would give priority to elaboration of a declaration on elimination of all forms of religious intolerance before resuming consideration of an international convention on the subject which would have resulted in further delay.

Human rights in armed conflicts were of special interest to us. We favored a West European-sponsored proposal that the Assembly endorse the progress achieved by the Conference of Government Experts on International Humanitarian Law Applicable in Armed Conflicts, convened by the ICRC in Geneva and support the convening of a diplomatic conference in 1974. Instead, the Assembly approved a Swedish-Mexican resolution on which we abstained. While the resolution endorsed the work being carried out by the ICRC, it called for agreement on a list of contentious issues including measures to prohibit use of certain weapons which we believe are more appropriately considered in a disarmament context.

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3. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL

Much of the Assembly action was devoted to debating and then endorsing resolutions relating to actions taken by UNCTAD, ECOSOC, and the UNDP's Governing Council and the reports of other UN bodies. Concentration on these economic and social activities reflects the growing allocation of UN resources (now approximately 95 percent) to the economic and social betterment of the developing world. Three actions in this area were particularly meaningful:

Environment. The General Assembly overwhelmingly approved the Stockholm Conference Declaration on the Environment, the World Plan of Action containing more than a hundred recommendations for global and regional action in the environmental field and a resolution on institutional arrangements. The latter resolution established: (a) a voluntary UN Fund for the Environment; (b) a UN Secretariat for the Environment; (c) a 58 nation Governing Council; and (d) a UN Environmental Board responsible for inter-Secretariat coordination.

The Secretariat will be located in Nairobi, Kenya, and will be headed by the unanimously elected Executive Director, Maurice Strong of Canada. For reasons of cost and efficiency, we cast a lone vote against Nairobi in Committee, but went along with the consensus in the plenary.

Population. A U.S.-drafted resolution on the United Nations Fund for Population Activities was adopted by the Plenary 106-0-20 (EE's and some Latin American countries including Brazil, Argentina, Chile, and Cuba) and should have a far-reaching impact on the effectiveness of the UN's population activities. This resolution made the UN Population Fund a part of the UNDP, thereby integrating it more closely into the normal development process; made the Governing Council of the UNDP the inter-governmental body responsible for giving policy guidance to the field; and changed the financial regulations so that the Fund would be on an annual rather than a full funding basis.

UN University. After years of discussion in various UN forums the GA finally adopted a resolution by an overwhelming majority, deciding to establish a UN

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University. Despite reservations about the vagueness of the plan, we voted with the majority. Based on voluntary financing, the structure would consist of a program and coordinating organ and a decentralized system of affiliated research institutions.

The Assembly also acted constructively on international drug abuse control, adopting resolutions which called for positive action on the relevant conventions, contributions to the UN Fund for Drug Abuse Control, and noted the developing countries' need for technical and financial aid in this field.

4. BUDGETARY AND ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

U.S. Assessment Rate. Our major success was the approval by a substantial majority (81-27-22 in the plenary) of our resolution to reduce the U.S. assessment rate from 31.52 percent to 25 percent. For several months prior to the vote we conducted an intensive campaign in New York, the capitals and Washington. Meanwhile, the Congress had enacted legislation in October which prohibited the U.S. from paying more than a 25 percent assessment in the UN and certain specialized agencies after January 1, 1974. The large vote for our resolution reflected concern on the part of informed member states that failure to approve it would complicate the financial problems of the world organization and might lead to a reduction of U.S. voluntary contributions to UN development programs.

Two additional resolutions relating to the scale of assessments were approved during the session. The minimum rate was lowered from 0.04 to 0.02 percent, and additional reductions are recommended in the assessment of those developing countries that pay more than the minimum assessment rate but have low per capita incomes. The reduction of the floor on assessments will complicate our opposition to the admission of microstates on the ground that they cannot meet the financial obligations of membership.

1973 UN Regular Budget. The U.S. supported the adoption of the budget, largely since it showed greater fiscal restraint than the budgets of 1971 and 1972, which we had not supported. The Secretary-General's budget estimate of \$224.2 million for calendar year 1973 was subsequently revised, and additions brought the total up to \$225.9 million. The 1973 appropriation is \$12.8 million, or 6.0 percent, above the budget adopted for 1972. The \$12.8 million increase is attributable to net increases of \$3.4 million in costs to maintain the 1972

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establishment in 1973, \$4.4 million for the existing building program in Geneva, \$2.0 million for a new environment secretariat in Nairobi, and \$3.0 for various other new programs.

Program Budgeting in the UN System. The 27th GA approved a fundamentally new system of budgeting for the UN and its direct subsidiary bodies. In future budget presentations all expenditures from all sources of revenue (voluntary as well as assessed) will be expressed in relation to program activities. The new budgets will be on a biennial basis beginning in 1974. The United States was one of the chief advocates of the new budget format. This format is a prerequisite for program budgeting which will facilitate coordination and help minimize duplication by providing compatible and synchronized budgets for the UN and the specialized agencies. Most of the latter already budget on a programmatic basis and many employ biennial financial periods.

UN Financial Situation. The Special Committee on the Financial Situation, formed at the 26th General Assembly under the chairmanship of Ambassador Algard of Norway to investigate the UN financial problem and make proposals for resolving it, reported a UN deficit of \$86.4 million and proposed a package solution involving the removal of several contentious peacekeeping items from the expenditure side of the budget and the use of miscellaneous income to pay for such costs. The proposal also included the transfer of technical assistance from the budget to the UN Development Program, which is funded from voluntary contributions. The main element in the package proposal--that substantial voluntary contributions be forthcoming from members to liquidate the UN deficit--faltered due to Soviet intransigence on the size, shares, and sequence of such contributions.

The U.S. position has been that it is willing to assist toward resolving the financial problem, but only within the context of an over-all solution that includes substantial voluntary contributions from those members who have withheld assessed payments. The General Assembly did not extend the life of the Special Committee, but asked the Secretary-General to explore all possibilities for an over-all solution of the financial difficulties and to establish a special account to receive voluntary contributions. Thus, the financial problem was left unsolved.

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Although the United Nations was forced to operate on a thin cash margin during 1972, it was able to avoid a liquidity crisis, largely because of the successful efforts of the Secretary-General to bring spending in line with anticipated income. Considerable opposition was expressed to the SYG's underspending of appropriations, but the U.S. urged that the UN continue to live within its income in the coming year.

UN Office Accommodations. The Secretary-General was authorized to negotiate a rental agreement for office space in a new building to be constructed by the United Nations Development Corporation across the street from UN Headquarters. In committee, a Cuban proposal to defer the question for a year, which would have foreclosed the opportunity for the UN to have an option on the space being constructed, was approved by 35 to 33, with 14 abstaining. The question was reopened in the plenary, and the authorization to negotiate such a lease was passed by 55 to 53, with 21 abstentions.

Host Country Relations. The Federal Executive Protective Service was again dispatched to New York to take up guard duty where the New York City police did not provide it. Despite this action, and other improvements in the past year, the security situation in New York still left something to be desired. Altogether in 1972 there were two bombings, two assaults, six burglaries, eight hold-ups, one case of breaking and entering, and 13 cases of vandalism involving UN Mission members and delegates to the UN. During the GA, incidents included the burglarizing of the hotel rooms of the GA President and a Nigèrian GA delegate, and the robbing of a Paraguayan delegate in a hotel elevator. However, except for minor cases of vandalism, none of the foreign missions to the UN suffered terrorist attacks. Moreover, delegates were made aware of U.S. enactment on October 24, 1972, of the Act for the Protection of Foreign Officials and Official Guests of the United States, and of U.S. ratification of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. At the Assembly, a balanced resolution was adopted without vote welcoming these U.S. actions and urging the host country to take all effective measures for the protection of the diplomatic community in New York.

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